

Korean Hostesses Clubs in Minami, Osaka : Preliminary Findings on Workers, Activities, and Income

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Introduction

This paper presents the preliminary findings of research on a Korean hostess club in *Minami*, Osaka. It explores the following questions: where Korean hostess clubs are located; how a Korean hostess club operates; how they influence the Korean community; who works there (focusing on their visa status); what kind of work is assigned to each worker; how much it costs to patron the Korean hostess club; and what the staffs' income is. This is based on detailed ethnographic data of the hostess' daily lives in *Minami*. The workspace of the hostess clubs allows me to observe a significant number of Korean hostesses and Korean male staff as well as multi-ethnic clients such as Japanese, resident Koreans, Koreans¹⁾, other Asians and Westerners.

Some magazine articles (e.g. weekly magazine, *Shuukan Shincho* 10/19/1995) and books (e.g. O 1990) have dealt with Korean club hostesses in Japan. But no comprehensive or ethnographic research exists on Korean hostess clubs in Japan (e.g. Aoki 2000). This is the first research of its kind.

Methods

I conducted research in the *Minami* area, Osaka, where Korean hostess clubs are concentrated. My fieldwork in Osaka, Japan lasted for ten months from November 2000 to August 2001. I conducted participant observation at a Korean hostess club and a Korean hostess lounge²⁾ as a hostess between November 2000 and February 2001. From March 2001 to August 2001, I conducted participant observation of their daily lives outside the clubs. I participated in Korean club workers' private activities including eating/drinking out, going to the public bath, movies, and shopping, as well as attending church. I also interviewed intensively with club workers who I came to know very well. Simultaneously, I researched library materials to contextualize my ethnographic data. Over this ten-month period, by living in the *Minami* area, I conducted solitary observation of public and neighborhood life in the *Minami* district in Osaka, which familiarized me with the physical site outside the clubs, the basic players, and the typical patterns of social-spatial activities.

Korean Clubs in *Minami*

Laying out portraits of activities at the Korean hostess club scenes of a typical day, I highlight unique and complex ethnic relations and gender roles played out by the hostesses, customers, waiters, managers, and *mama*³⁾ in this “contact zone”.⁴⁾ I use the technique of “thick description” (Geertz 1973) of the geography, work sites, job descriptions, working conditions, as well as interactions among workers and clients.

“Korean Clubs” :

So-called “Korean clubs” in Japan refer to the hostess clubs where most workers are Korean. They cater to mostly Japanese and resident Koreans. The Korean clubs primarily hire Korea-born Korean⁵⁾ hostesses and male staff with a few exceptions.⁶⁾ I surveyed all thirty-three Korean hostess clubs in *Minami*. It is hard to distinguish them from Japanese hostess clubs from the outside because most clubs’ names are not Korean ethnic names, and most workers including hostesses wear western-style suits or dresses. I also found out that the average operation period of Korean clubs is 2.76 years based on my survey. One of the managers who has been working at Korean clubs for more than ten years said to me, “the life of a Korean club is short.” There are only a couple of Korean clubs that have operated more than ten years. The oldest Korean club is about 15 years old.

Geography and Korean Ethnic Service Sectors in *Minami*:

Osaka is one of two areas where Korean hostess clubs and bars⁷⁾ are most heavily concentrated in Japan. According to the research of the Korean Broadcasting System in 1995, there are 3,000 Korean hostess clubs and bars in Japan: 1,200 in Tokyo, 900 in Osaka⁸⁾, and 900 in other parts of Japan. It is estimated that 40,000 Korean hostesses live in Japan. Osaka also has the largest resident Korean community in Japan.

According to the Osaka City Statistical Data, at the end of 1999, there were 608 hostess bars and clubs in *Chuo-ku*, where my field *Minami* is located. *Minami*, meaning “south,” is the southern part of *Chuo-ku*, where not only Korean hostess clubs and bars are located, but also Japanese and other ethnic clubs are highly concentrated. *Minami* has a long history as a pleasure district in Osaka since 1626.

Minami is surrounded by four major avenues; the north end is *Nagahori Ave.* The south end is *Sennichimae Ave.* where *Namba Station*⁹⁾ is located. The west end is *Yotsubashi Ave.* and the east end is *Sakaisuji Ave.* This area is less than one square kilometer. More than a couple of hundred Korean drinking places exist in this area, including Korean bars called *sunakku* (snack) or *launji* (lounge). I found out that Korean clubs and bars are concentrated in the southeast of *Minami*. From the east end to the west end is about 150 meters, from the south end to the north end is 300 meters. The north end is *Suhoumachi-dori*. The south end is *Soemon-cho*, which is parallel to the *Doutonbori River*. The east end is *Sakaisuji*. The west end

is *Tamayamachi*. In the *Minami* area, there are 33 Korean hostess clubs. When you stroll in this area, you often hear Korean conversation and notice Korean signs of restaurants on the streets. Korean hostess clubs are usually located inside commercial buildings called *baa biru* (bar building) which house a number of clubs, bars and restaurants. The Korean club that I researched is located in a bar building which houses other Korean clubs and nightclubs as well as Japanese clubs.

Adjacent to the east side of *Minami* is a town called *Shimanouchi* (0.5 square kilometers), where many club workers live. I lived in a small apartment here for ten months. The following is the data collected in the national census of 2,000. The total number of households in *Shimanouchi* is 2,445. The total population is 3,593 (male: 1,556, female: 2,037). The concentration of Korean club workers at *Shimanouchi* became clear through my observation as well as interviews.¹⁰⁾ There are two 24-hour supermarkets, several convenience stores, and internet cafes. Several public baths, restaurants, rental video-shops and coffee shops are open until early in the morning. Some boutiques and a bookstore stay open until 4 or 5 a.m.

Korean Ethnic Service Sectors:

A couple of free monthly magazines written in Korean are available for Koreans at the various Korean ethnic shops such as coffee shops, internet cafes, and grocery stores. One of them is called *Tongrami*, which means "Circle" in Korean. Based on the telephone directory and advertisements of the April, 2001 issue of *Tongrami* (Circle) as well as my own research, there

are more than one hundred twenty Korean ethnic shops other than Korean hostess clubs and bars in *Minami* and its vicinity. Table 1 shows the Korean ethnic service sectors.

Table 1

Korean Ethnic Service Sectors	Number
Korean restaurants	53
Christian churches	14
Boutiques	13
Beauty salons ¹¹⁾	12
Rental video shops	12
Unlicensed taxi drivers	10
Small supermarkets	5
Internet cafes	5
Host clubs	4
Jewelry stores	3
Real estate agencies	2
Dressmaker's shops	2
Public baths with sauna	2
Fortune tellers	2
Night clubs	2
Judicial scrivener office	1
Shoe-repair shop	1
Rental comic store	1
Dry-cleaning shop	1
Consumer credit firm	1
Esthetic clinic	1

There are also flower shops, liquor stores, and several illegal casinos. I also saw several Korean vendors selling vegetables, shoes, bags, cigarettes, and snacks on the street. One of my findings is that Korean clubs have attracted the various kinds of Korean small businesses listed above, and contributed to the development of the Korean community significantly. These contributions of Korean hostess clubs have hardly been discussed in past studies on the Korean community in Japan.

Workers at the Korean Club: Gender, Hierarchy, and Visa

The Korean club where I worked as a hostess

was run by the following forty six staff: thirty nine women and seven men. The female members are all Koreans; one cook, one bus person, eight show members, twenty-three hostesses and five *chii mama* (little madam) who help the seating of hostesses, and *oo mama* (big madam) who is the owner of the club. Unlike female staff, the male staff members are ethnically mixed. The *senmu* (means "executive director" in Japanese) and accompanist called *sensei*¹²⁾ are Japanese.¹³⁾ All other male staff such as *tenchou* (superintendent), director (*buchou*), manager, and two waiters called *Shunin*¹⁴⁾ are Korean. Whereas female staff are referred to as a cook, bus person, and hostesses, male staff members are addressed with some respect such as director or chief. I argue that this is a reflection of gender ideology embedded in the workers' minds. That is to say, men should be treated with respect.

The major concern among Korean workers at

the hostess club is their visa status. This is because their visa status affects their lives in various ways such as their accessibility to jobs, and how and where they live.¹⁵⁾ The workers' visa status varies from naturalized Korean Japanese to overstayed Koreans.¹⁶⁾ Those who have expired visa cannot work at Korean hostess clubs anymore.¹⁷⁾ A recent phenomenon is the increase of the so-called "tribe of migratory birds" who enter Japan with tourist visas, and keep coming back to Japan to work for fifteen days, in order to avoid to being stuck in Japan with expired visa.

Table 2 indicates the visa status among the Korean club workers. The following legal description is based upon the terms used by the Japan Immigration Association (1996: 29-37).

Investor/Business Manager Visa, Temporary Visitor Visa, and all student visas do not allow visa holders to work at hostess clubs. If they are found working at the hostess clubs, they

Table 2

Visa	Duration	Workers at Korean hostess clubs ¹⁸⁾
Investor/Business Manager	3 years, 1 year, 6 months	One executive director, two hostesses
Entertainer Visa ¹⁹⁾	1 year or 3 months	Eight show members
Temporary Visitor Visa ²⁰⁾	90 days or 15 days ²¹⁾	Seven hostesses
College Student Visa	1 year or 6 months	One waiter, one manager, one superintendent, two hostesses, two directors
Pre-college Student Visa	1 year or 6 months or 3 months	Three hostesses, three waiters, one bus person, one superintendent
Dependent Visa	3 years, 1 year, 6 months or 3 months	One director, one cook, one hostess
Permanent Resident Visa	Permanent	One <i>chii mama</i>
Spouse or Child of Japanese National Visa	3 years, 1 year or 6 months	Ten hostesses and one <i>chii mama</i>
Spouse or Child of Permanent Resident	3 years, 1 year or 6 months	One director
Naturalized Japanese	Permanent	One <i>chii mama</i> and one <i>oo mama</i>

will be sent back to Korea immediately by the immigration offices.

Activities at the Korean Hostess Clubs:

Laying out various portraits at the Korean hostess club, this section highlights two points: first, the unique and complex ethnic relations/gender roles played out by the hostesses, customers, waiters, managers, and *mama*; second, the system of the Korean clubs in *Minami*. Unlike corporate work where female workers are often expected to work as assistants to male workers (e.g. Ogasawara 1998), women play the main roles at the hostess clubs. Hostesses and *mama* are the ones who deal with the customers directly. Customers come and spend money to meet them. Male workers are expected to act as assistants to the females at the hostess clubs. Waiters clean the tables and bring things ordered by the hostesses. The male management staff support the owner, *oo mama*, for management in general. I argue that these roles in the work place destabilize the gender roles, which are prevalent outside the club. This is why it is worth closely examining how the gender roles are transformed, contested, and negotiated at the hostess clubs.

Ethnicity is played out differently among Korean hostesses. Most resident Korean hostesses pass as Japanese at the Japanese hostess clubs, because they think being Korean is a disadvantage. On the other hand, hostesses from Korea turn their Koreanness into a charm.²²⁾ Even limited Japanese language skills can become an advantage if it is presented in the right way.²³⁾

In the following sections, I describe the activ-

ities inside and outside the Korean hostess club. Unlike the past research of the hostess clubs in Japan (e.g. Allison 1994, Dalby 1985, Mock 1996), my research adds new views by analyzing three kinds of data: 1) the management data which include sales and income of individual workers as well as sales, expenses, and profit of the club; 2) my observation of daily lives of the workers inside and outside the clubs; and 3) intensive interviews with the superintendents, hostesses, waiters, and clients.

I will show a typical day of the Korean club by following the timetable, and point out the multiplicity of activities inside and outside the Korean club. The inside of the club is 170 square meters with seventy seats and twenty auxiliary seats. The Korean club operates from 7:30 p.m. to midnight, Monday through Saturday including Japanese national holidays.

When I asked to meet the superintendent to ask questions or interview him, he often suggested that I come to the club earlier, around 15:00 or 16:00. And every time I was there, I was invited to stay to have dinner with them. These were great opportunities to talk with the male staff as well as to observe how they interact with each other before business hours.

As customers start to show up around 8 p.m., hostesses voluntarily go to the table if they know the customers already. Often, *mama* order particular hostesses to go to certain tables. This is different from the Japanese hostess clubs. At the Japanese hostess clubs, the club superintendent orders hostesses to go to a certain table. When *mama* wants a particular hostess to serve certain customers, she says so

Table 3:

Time	Activities
15:00	The female cook comes to the club and starts to prepare dinner for the male staff. Unlike the Japanese hostess clubs, the cook is usually female at the Korean hostess clubs. The same phenomenon is observed at Korean restaurants. ²⁴⁾
16:00	The manager and two waiters show up and start to prepare for business hours. The manager keeps the books of the club, and orders things such as food, drinks, and fixtures. The senior waiter cleans the bathroom for the hostesses, prepares rolled-up washcloths (<i>oshibori</i>), and organizes customers' reserved bottles of whiskey based on the reservations. The junior waiter vacuum-cleans the whole club, dusts the sofas, and wipes the tables. The bus person helps the cook to prepare dinner for the staff.
17:30	The club superintendent called <i>tenchou</i> shows up and checks various things. When I observed him, he was often on the phone or computer. During this time, the florist comes in and waters the plants. The liquor store clerk brings in the bottles of beer and whiskey, and the general store clerk brings in cartons of cigarettes and snacks.
18:00	Dinner starts at one of the tables where customers sit down during business hours. The female cook and bus person prepare Korean food but they do not eat with the male staff. They seemed to eat by themselves. ²⁵⁾ This gender separation seems to come from the custom from Korea.
18:30	The Japanese executive director called <i>senmu</i> shows up and reports his activities to the superintendent in an unofficial manner, such as what he has done during the day including collecting due bills (<i>tsuke</i>) and visiting clients' companies for greetings. According to the Korean superintendent, this executive director does not join the dinner for the following two reasons; one is that he does not like Korean food; and the other is he has a family to eat dinner with. He shows up around the time when the dinner ends. The manager and waiters clean the table and bring coffee to the superintendent and executive director. The manager and waiters go back to their work without having coffee.
19:30	Eight show members show up by 19:30. All of them are female. They change from their casual clothes into long dresses or Korean costumes. Usually at least one show member wears a Korean costume called <i>chima chogori</i> . They retouch their make-up and hair in the locker room, which is behind the kitchen. After that, they wait for the customers at the large table closest to the entrance. ²⁶⁾
19:50	Many hostesses walk to the <i>Minami</i> area from <i>Shimanouchi</i> around this time. Some commute by bicycles and taxis. I often observed hostesses walking and talking on their cellular phone with their clients.
20:00	Hostesses and <i>mama</i> show up. Inside the register counter, there are timecard machines. All hostesses have to punch in when they arrive at the club. ²⁷⁾ They are already wearing suits or dresses with high-heels. They do not change their clothes but retouch their make-up and hair in the locker room. Many of them smoke during this time because smoking at the table is prohibited during business hours. ²⁸⁾ After that, they join the show members and wait seated. An accompanist called <i>sensei</i> shows up around this time as well. He accompanies customers on the fancy keyboard. At the Korean hostess clubs, they use this "live" accompanist instead of <i>karaoke</i> ²⁹⁾ to differentiate from second-class bars and lounges. He also plays background music when nobody wants to sing. He is sometimes invited to the client's table to drink and chat together.
20:30	Hostesses, show members and <i>mama</i> accompanying customers show up. If they accompany a customer, they can come in up to thirty minutes late.

through the superintendent. One owner *mama* at the Japanese hostess club told me, "I should not pull ahead too much. It is better to let the superintendent deal with it." Unlike the Japanese hostess clubs, the superintendent hardly ever ordered hostesses to go to a certain table unless there was a request from customers at the Korean club I worked. This is just one example of the differences I observed between Korean hostess clubs and Japanese hostess clubs.

The following is the assigned work for each worker during business hours. Show members go to the customers' table with the most priority,³⁰⁾ then, younger hostesses. Of course, if the customer is a particular hostess's client, this hostess has the priority to sit down at his table. While sitting at the table with the customers, the kind of work assigned to show members and hostesses is pretty much the same.³¹⁾ So, the following description includes the show members as well. Usually, the hostess who knows the customer best sits next to the customer, then, younger hostesses sit close to the customer. Each customer is assigned to one hostess at least in principle. They are the couple of the day. The job of each hostess is to entertain the partner by chatting, making drinks, feeding food, lighting cigarettes, and changing the ashtray. If extra hostesses are available, these hostesses sit close to the bottle of whiskey and prepare drinks for the customers as well as hostesses.

The *chii mama* look at the entrance carefully every time they hear male staff saying "Welcome to our Club (*Irasshaimase*)!" in a cheerful voice.³²⁾ If one of them finds her own customer,

she leaves the table, gets *oshibori* (wet towel), and leads the customer to an available table.³³⁾ *Chii mama* also move around hostesses and show members during business hours according to their clients' needs. They also take the initiative at the table, so that customers do not get bored, by keeping the conversation at the table lively and suggesting some games.³⁴⁾ *Chii mama's* role is bringing in customers, rotating hostesses from table to table effectively, and keeping an eye on things so that service is appropriate and smooth.

Oo mama greets all the customers one after another while she walks around the club. She spends more time with the important or close clients by sitting with them, whereas she just gives a greeting to the less important or distant clients. Some customers avoid *oo mama* because they simply do not like her masculine character or are afraid of her ordering expensive wine, which costs at least \$250 per bottle.

The cook prepares simple Korean dishes such as pancakes called *chijimi*, dried and grilled squid, salads, and assorted fruit for clients. Food can be also ordered outside the club through the manager.³⁵⁾ The bus person is busy washing glasses, ashtrays, and dishes. Those two female workers are rather invisible from the clients' point of view because they stay behind the kitchen counter. Therefore, they just wear a casual sweater and long pants with aprons.

The superintendent, director, executive director, and piano accompanist wear regular business suits. Waiters and the manager wear white shirts and black pants. Male staff are advised to sit down at any table pretending to be

customers when a Korean hostess club is raided by the immigration office. However, hostesses have no way to pretend since most clients are male.

The superintendent overlooks all the activities at the club. He sometimes sits down at a customer's table upon request, drinks, and converses with them. The executive director spends a good amount of time with his clients at the table. His work is very similar to *chii mama*. Therefore, there are sometimes conflicts between *chii mama* and the executive director over sales; to whom do the sales belong when both claim that the client is theirs. The superintendent has to mediate this kind of conflict. He said this was one of the difficult tasks he had and it "gave me a headache."

The manager usually stays around the cash register, takes care of phone calls and bills the clients. Two waiters are busy taking away the used glasses and dishes as well as taking various orders from customers and hostesses. They bring things like a piece of paper and pen, or cigarettes, and take orders of food. On top of that, the senior waiter is responsible for taking care of orders of new bottles of whisky and wine. The junior waiter periodically changes the ice pails. The accompanist plays the keyboard to accompany a customer when he sings at the stage. The repertory of customers varies from Japanese and Korean songs to English and Spanish songs. The accompanist is sometimes given a tip from them.³⁵⁾

22:00	Show members leave the table to change into their show costumes and set their hair for the half-hour show. The waiters and accompanist set up the stage part.
22:30	The lights get dark and the show starts. The accompanist controls the tape-recorded background music.

The show is usually composed of four parts. Part one is Korean traditional dance played by three dancers who are in their late 20s. They wear Korean traditional costumes and hats, often with fans or Korean drums. During part two, a western-style sexy dance is performed usually by one dancer but sometimes by two or three dancers who are also in their late 20s with disco music. They wear bikini types of costumes. This show is the most popular and the dancers sometimes get tips of ten thousand yen (\$80) from the customers during this show. The tip is usually given to a hostess from a customer at the table, and she brings the tip to the dancer. A tip is always handed to performers using disposable wooden chopsticks. Usually a

ten thousand yen note (\$80) is pinched between the chopsticks to demonstrate tipping more vividly. During part three, a singer who is thirty years old, sings Japanese, English, and Korean songs. She is a top sales hostess as well at the club. She also often gets tips during her show. Finally, the female drummer who is in her mid-20s performs a Korean traditional drum-dance show. She was trained at the college of Korean traditional music and dance in Korea. There is competition over sales and customers in general among hostesses and show members in hostess clubs. So, I was surprised that hostesses showed their support for the show members by clapping and cheering.

The contents of the performances change ev-

ery three to six months as all the show members change except for the singer. She has been in Japan for ten years and her visa status is more stable. Show members come to Japan with an entertainment visa. I argue that show members function as ethnic tokens at the Korean hostess club. At least one or two of them wear Korean costumes and two out of the four programs of the show are traditional Korean dance and drum shows. During the show, they wear more

traditional Korean costumes. Many customers also perceive them as “fresh faces” from Korea, who recently came to Japan. Their “freshness” appeals to certain kinds of customers.³⁷⁾ So, *mama* and male management staff solicit to those customers, by telling them, “We have new show members now.” Without show members, it is hard to distinguish their establishment from Japanese hostess clubs at first glance.

23:00	Taxis start to fill the streets around the <i>Minami</i> area. Taxis line up on both sides of <i>Sakaishuji Ave.</i> , which is a five-lane one-way street going north. Around midnight, three or four lanes are completely occupied by taxis, which wait for the customers and hostesses. The drivers hope that their fares have a long trip back to their home.
0:00	Official operations are supposed to end at midnight. However, if the customers of the table do not leave, the assigned hostesses have to stay in theory. Particularly, show members have to stay until 0:30 at least.

When the customers leave the club, the hostesses, show members and *mama* who are at the table go to the ground level with the customers to see them off by saying “thank you very much,” and “good night.”

After business hours, how the workers spend time varies. Some hostesses go home. They may go to Japanese or Korean restaurants to eat supper by themselves or with their clients. At times, they may meet their clients at Korean coffee shops to have a date with them. Some go to host clubs or illegal casinos. Others go to drink with or without their clients to a Korean bar. Typically, the regular charge is around 10,000 yen (\$80) per person including *karaoke*, ice, water, and appetizer if you go to such a bar with your customer. In this case, the customer pays. If they go to drink at a Korean bar by themselves, they are charged only half-price because of the following custom. If the club

workers visit a Korean bar with their clients, 40–50% of the sales will be reimbursed later to the club workers because the time with clients is conceived of as “work.”

About half of the hostesses go to work at other bars called “supper” or “snack.” This midnight shift is called the second session (*ibu* in Korean).³⁸⁾ Some male staff are also engaged in this double shift. Why do they work so hard? Some said to make money quickly. Others said there is nothing else to do at home. Usually the midnight shift is paid by the hour without assigned norms. But that does not mean there is no pressure for sales. One hostess said, “If I cannot bring in a customer, I feel kind of uncomfortable going to work.” The hourly wage for hostesses is between 2,500 yen (\$20) and 3,500 yen (\$28), and for *chii mama* is between 4,000 yen (\$32) and 5,000 yen (\$40).

1:00	Male staff, the female cook and bus person leave the club after finishing their own assigned work. The waiters clean up the tables. The cook and bus person clean the kitchen. The manager counts the sales of the day and reports it to the superintendent.
2:00	2 a.m. is the curfew for the show members. They live in the 3-bedroom dormitory provided by the club and they have to go back to the dormitory by 2 a.m.

The dormitory is a five-minute walk from the club, in an apartment complex. Some other Korean hostess clubs also have their dormitories in this building. The director also lives in this building by himself. The apartment is con-

veniently located, but it is small for eight people. They use bunk beds to house eight people. They are also assigned cooking and cleaning at the dormitory.

4:00	Midnight clubs and bars end around this time. But the operation hours are flexible depending on the customers. It ends around 2 a.m. when there are no customers and it goes as late as six or seven a.m. if there are customers.
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I also conducted my participant observation at one of these midnight clubs in December 2000, which is the busiest season for the clubs and bars in Japan. During this period, I felt the most physical challenge of my fieldwork because of the long hours. I started to work from 20:00 and I did not know when I could finish. I sometimes stayed with my colleagues and clients until 7 a.m. I could not do anything but work during this time. I almost collapsed into my bed when I got home. One of my colleagues, though, says she goes to bed around 8 or 9 a.m. because she cannot go to sleep immediately.

Many hostesses wake up in the afternoon.

Most hostesses live within a one-mile (1.6 kilometer) radius of the club where they can commute on foot in areas such as *Shimanouchi*, or by taxi for less than one thousand yen (\$8) in areas such as *Shitaderamachi*, *Nishi-Nagahori*, *Daikokucho*, and *Tanimachi*. *Shimanouchi* where I lived is one of the most popular areas among Korean club workers. It is less than a ten-minute walk to most Korean clubs.

I found that many Korean hostesses love to go to the public bath where they can use the sauna as well. The public bath is a space for physical and mental relaxation as well as socialization among female workers.

17:00	Hostesses and <i>mama</i> start to go to the beauty salon and have their hair done. It costs between two thousand five hundred yen to three thousand yen (\$20-\$24). ³⁹⁾
18:30	Hostesses go to a restaurant if they have an appointment to have dinner with their clients. After having dinner, they will bring their customers to the club. This is called " <i>dohan</i> (accompanying the customer)".

Besides these activities, some manage to fit in time to go to school or to do daytime jobs, and meet their clients privately. Going to

church is also prevalent among Korean hostesses. Some go to church not only Sunday but also other days as well.

The Expense of the Customers at the Korean Club:

It is expensive to go to hostess clubs. When you go to a hostess club for the first time, you are expected to buy a bottle of whiskey to keep at the club. This is called "*botoru kiipu* (bottle keep)." The prices vary from twenty thousand yen (\$160) to one hundred fifty thousand yen (\$1200). The most common whiskey at this Korean club is *Hibiki*, produced by the Japanese manufacturer, Suntory. It costs thirty thousand yen (\$240). This is almost five times the retail price. Secondly, twenty thousand yen (\$160) is charged for each customer as a cover charge. So, if you go to a Korean club for the first time, you have to pay at least fifty thousand yen (\$400). If you go to the club with a hostess or a show member, you are charged an extra fifteen thousand yen (\$120) as *douhan ryou* (fee for being accompanied by a hostess).⁴⁰⁾ Assorted snacks such as candy, dried squid, dried seaweed, and vegetables or fruit plates are served without an extra charge⁴¹⁾, unlike the Japanese hostess clubs.

Average Monthly Income for Korean Club Staff Members:

Monthly income varies depending on the job title. First, I have divided the staff members into six groups; the first group of people is most of the male and female kitchen staff who get a fixed monthly salary; the second group of people is show members who get a fixed monthly salary through their productions plus cash bonuses directly from the club if applicable. The third group is mostly hostesses who get day wages plus cash bonuses directly from the club if applicable. I divided this group into two. Group III - A are the hostesses who live in Osaka. The group III - B are the hostesses who does back and forth between Japan and Korea with a 14-day tourist visa. The latter group has fewer working days. The fourth group of people is sales hostess who has some special arrangement with the club according to their sales. The fifth group is *chii mama* and the executive director, who are either on straight commission or get daily wage. The last one is *oo mama* who is the owner. The following is an example of the actual income of each group of people. These tables are based on the salaries while I was doing my fieldwork.

125 yen = US\$1

Group I : Seven Male Staff and two Female Kitchen Staff who get a fixed monthly salary.

Superintendent (<i>tenchou</i>)	850,000 yen (\$6,800)
Director (<i>buchou</i>)	650,000 yen (\$5,200)
Associate Director (<i>jichou</i>) ⁴²⁾	600,000 yen (\$4,800)
Manager	300,000 yen (\$2,400)
Waiters called Senior Staff (<i>Shunin</i>) 1	200,000 yen (\$1,600)
Waiters called Senior Staff (<i>Shunin</i>) 2	200,000 yen (\$1,600)
Accompanist (<i>Sensei</i>)	600,000 yen (\$4,800)
Female Cook	300,000 yen (\$2,500)
Female Bus Person	200,000 yen (\$1,600)

Group II : Eight Female Show Members who get a fixed monthly salary through their productions plus cash bonuses directly from the club.

Salary paid to the Productions by the club	Average bonuses paid directly to the show members from the club	The commission that the productions take	Average income show members can get
440,000 yen (\$3,520)	17,000 yen (\$136)	220,000 yen (\$1,760)	237,000 yen (\$1,896)

The club pays a fixed salary for the show members to the productions. The amount is four hundred forty thousand yen (\$3,520) per person. The daily wage is approximately seventeen thousand yen (\$136). Half of the salary is deducted by the productions as commission. Therefore, the actual salary that the show

members can get is approximately two hundred twenty thousand yen (\$1,760) per month. If they accompany a client to the club, they are given one thousand yen (\$8) per customer. On national holidays, the club is mainly operated by the people of Group I and II. In other words, show members, kitchen and male staff mem-

GROUP III – A, Fourteen Day Wage Hostesses who get day wages plus bonuses directly from the club if applicable. yen (\$)

Pseudo-nym	Working Dates	Sales	Daily wages	Bonuses	Partial debts paid back	Sales unpaid by customers ⁽⁴⁾	Fines (norm ⁽⁴⁵⁾ , tardiness)	Salary paid ⁽⁴⁶⁾
1	17	1,435,000 (\$11,480)	24,000 (\$192)	202,000 (\$1,296)	0 ⁽⁴⁷⁾	105,000 (\$840)	30,000 (\$240)	435,000 (\$3,480)
2	22	940,000 (\$7,520)	25,000 (\$200)	73,000 (\$584)	100,000 (\$800)	0	5,000 (\$40)	503,000 (\$4,024)
3	25	700,000 (\$5,600)	22,000 (\$176)	50,000 (\$400)	70,000 (\$560)	0	0	465,000 (\$3,720)
4	21	600,000 (\$4,800)	23,000 (\$184)	18,000 (\$144)	100,000 (\$800)	0	10,000 (\$80)	376,000 (\$3,008)
5	13 ⁽⁴⁸⁾	180,000 (\$1,440)	21,000 (\$168)	8,000 (\$64)	0 ⁽⁴⁹⁾	0	0	266,000 (\$2,128)
6	19	160,000 (\$1,280)	20,000 (\$160)	2,000 (\$16)	100,000 (\$800)	20,000 (\$160)	50,000 (\$400)	197,000 (\$1,576)
7	17	140,000 (\$1,120)	25,000 (\$200)	12,000 (\$96)	0	50,000 (\$400)	10,000 (\$80)	333,000 ⁽⁵⁰⁾ (\$2,664)
8	20	125,000 (\$1,000)	20,000 (\$160)	6,000 (\$48)	0	0	0	391,000 (\$3,128)
9	2	100,000 (\$800)	23,000 (\$184)	0	0	0	0	39,000 ⁽⁵¹⁾ (\$312)
10	21	0	20,000 (\$160)	56,000 (\$448)	100,000 (\$800)	0	5,000 (\$40)	356,000 (\$2,848)
11	23	0	20,000 (\$160)	44,000 (\$352)	50,000 (\$400)	0	0	439,000 (\$3,512)
12	20	0	20,000 (\$160)	3,000 (\$24)	0	0	6,000 (\$48)	382,000 (\$3,056)
13	21	0	18,000 (\$144)	0	0	0	0	363,000 (\$2,904)
14	1	100,000 (\$800)	20,000 (\$160)	2,000 (\$16)	0	0	0	-30,000 ⁽⁵²⁾

bers have only one day off a week on Sunday. They are the ones who work the longest hours and most days including national holidays

There are three advantages to be a show member. First, show members can live in the dormitory and they do not need to pay rent and utilities. Second, they do not need to worry about their visa because the production and the hostess club take care of their entertainer visa, which allows them work at the clubs.⁴³⁾ Finally, they have less pressure of sales than the regular hostesses. Therefore, some show members come back to Japan to work repeatedly as entertainers, whereas others decide to work as hostesses, so that they can get a better salary.

The salaries of Group I and II are rather straightforward because their monthly salaries are fixed. The salaries of the following four groups are more complex and vary depending on the individual. I will show the complexities by using the tables below.

They get day wages plus cash bonuses in the middle of the following month. The day wage varies depending on sales, physical appearance, and popularity. It ranges from eighteen thousand yen (\$144) to twenty eight thousand yen (\$233). If they accompany a client to the club, they are given one thousand yen (\$8) per customer. Hostesses and show members are also eligible for the following cash bonuses depending upon their sales: accompanying prize (more than twelve times per month), sales prize (the number one and two sales), and prize for perfect attendance.

GROUP III – B. Seven Tourist Visa Hostesses who get day wages plus bonuses directly from the club if applicable. yen (\$)

Pseudo-nym	Working Dates	Sales	Daily wages	Bonuses	Partial debts paid back	Sales unpaid by customers	Fines (norm, tardiness)	Salary paid
15	11	495,000 (\$3,960)	22,000 (\$176)	8,000 (\$64)	60,000 (\$480)	70,000 (\$560)	5,000 (\$40)	100,000 (\$800)
16	0	0	0	0	0 ⁵³⁾	0	0	0
17	12	0	22,000 (\$176)	5,000 (\$40)	0 ⁵⁴⁾	0	3,000 (\$24)	258,000 ⁵⁵⁾ (\$2,064)
18	9	230,000 (\$1,840)	23,000 (\$184)	5,000 (\$40)	0 ⁵⁶⁾	0	0	204,000 ⁵⁷⁾ (\$1,632)
19	9	0	20,000 (\$160)	0	0	0	0	180,000 ⁵⁸⁾ (\$2,128)
20	9	0	20,000 (\$160)	0	0	0	0	165,000 (\$1,320)
21	9	0	20,000 (\$160)	0	0	0	0	165,000 (\$1,320)
22	16	770,000 (\$6,216)	21,000 (\$168)	89,500 (\$716)	0	0	0	410,500 (\$3,284)

GROUP IV, Two Sales Hostesses who had a special arrangement with the club according to their sales

Pseudo-nym	Working Dates	Sales	Daily wages	Bonuses	Partial debts paid back	Sales unpaid by customers	Fines (norm, tardiness)	Salary paid
23	21	2,420,000 (\$19,360)	700,000 (\$5,600)	322,000 (\$2,576)	300,000 (\$2,400)	0	50,000 (\$400)	557,000 (\$4,456)
24	22	2,300,000 (\$18,400)	1,035,000 ⁵⁹⁾ (\$8,240)	0	0 ⁶⁰⁾	550,000 (\$4,400)	0	170,000 ⁶¹⁾ (\$1,360)

GROUP V: One Executive Director (*senmu*), and Five *Chii Mama* who are on either straight commission or fixed day wage;

Pseudo-nym	Working Dates	Sales	Daily wages	Bonuses	Partial debts paid back	Sales unpaid by customers	Fines (norm, tardiness)	Salary paid
25	16	3,880,000 (\$31,040)	1,843,000 (\$14,744)	0	500,000 (\$4,000)	235,000 (\$1,880)	0	1,078,000 (\$8,624)
26	23	3,815,000 (\$30,520)	1,812,000 (\$14,496)	0	200,000 (\$1,600)	155,000 (\$1,240)	0	1,427,000 (\$11,416)
27	22	3,277,000 (\$26,216)	1,556,000 (\$12,448)	0	500,000 (\$4,000)	0	0	1,026,000 (\$8,208)
28	15	1,585,000 (\$12,680)	752,000 (\$6,016)	0	300,000 (\$2,400)	50,000 (\$400)	0	372,000 (\$2,976)
29	18	830,000 (\$6,640)	450,000 ⁶²⁾ (\$3,600)	0	100,000 (\$800)	0	0	120,000 ⁶³⁾ (\$960)

The income of majority of *chii mama* and executive director are based on their sales. The club subtracts 10,000 yen (\$80) for miscellaneous fees and 20,000 (\$160) for tax from *chii mama*. The income of four *chii mama* are solely based on their sales. Each *mama* and the club divide her sales in half. Then *chii mama* also pay of 5% of their portion to the club for expenses such as whisky, hostess fees, and rent of the club, etc. In other words, her monthly salary fluctuates drastically depending on her sales. The base income of the executive director (*senmu*) is around sales divided by two, then minus 5 %, equaling about one million yen (\$8,000). Only one *chii mama* receives fixed daily wage.

The monthly salary of five *chii mama* is

somewhere between five hundred thousand yen (\$4,000) and two million yen (\$16,000). The average monthly income is 1,282,600 yen (\$10,261). However, the average net income (*tedori*) is 804,600 yen (\$6,437). This is due to the repayment of an advance loan, the uncollected balance (*mishuu*) from their clients, tax (20,000 yen = \$160), and miscellaneous expenses (*zappi*, 10,000 yen = \$80).

The employees of Groups III, IV, and V have the privilege of getting an advance loan if necessary. The amount varies depending on their sales record and sales potential. It ranges from five hundred thousand yen (\$4,000) to five million yen (\$40,000). Ten percent of the total loan amount is deducted from their salary. For example, if the loan amount is five million yen

(\$40,000), fifty thousand yen (\$4000) is automatically deducted from their salary each time.

GROUP VI: *Oo mama*, the Owner of the Club

Oo mama's income is the surplus of the club revenue since she is the owner who has invested around one hundred million yen (\$800,000) to start her own club. The average monthly surplus is around four million yen (\$32,000). However, it fluctuates a great deal from month to month: from 14 million yen surplus (+\$112,000) to minus 1.4 million yen (-\$11,200).

Conclusion

The preliminary findings of my research are as follows. There are thirty-three Korean hostess clubs in *Minami*, Osaka in Japan. The Korean hostess clubs attract various Korean ethnic service sectors such as restaurants, beauty parlors, and churches in this area. The workers at the Korean hostess clubs are predominantly women but there are male employees as well. Eighty-three percent are women and seventeen percent are men at the club I researched. Also, due to the nature of the hostess club, the main role of entertaining clients is done by females. Male staff members are expected to assist female workers. This is quite different from prevalent gender roles. Show members in particular function as Korean ethnic tokens by their dress and short tenure in Japan. Visa issues are quite important for the workers at the Korean hostess clubs. Visas affect their quality of life including their acces-

sibility to jobs, and where and how they live. The Korean hostess club workers tend to work longer hours than the Japanese hostess club workers. About half of them engage in the second midnight shift as well.⁶⁴⁾ The income of Korean club workers varies from minus 30,000 yen (-\$240) to 1.5 million yen (\$12,000) per month. More than half of them have borrowed money from the club and they have to pay that back every month from their salary. Besides, twenty percent of female workers have to pay their clients' debts to the club. Therefore, their actual monthly income is not as high as I expected. In future publications, I will pursue a further analysis of the structure, particularly how ethnicity and sexuality are played out at the hostess club.

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- 1) "Koreans" here means newcomer Koreans transferred to Japan by Korean companies and the government.
- 2) A lounge is a smaller hostess club.
- 3) *Mama* literally means "mother" in Japanese. *Mama* at hostess clubs means a woman who is the head of the female workers. Some of them are actual owners of the clubs. I observed the usage of the term "*mama*" to refer to people other than hostess club *mama* such as restaurant owners and boutique owners to show some respect.
- 4) Pratt's notion of "contact zone" means "an attempt to invoke the spatial and temporal copresence of subjects previously separated by geographic and historical disjunctures, and whose trajectories now intersect." These relationships are often asymmetrical in terms of power. (Pratt 1992: 7)
- 5) I am hesitant to use the term "newcomer" here because some migrated to Japan more than twenty years ago and became residents in reality.
- 6) There are two Japanese male staff in the club where I worked. I also interviewed resident Korean hostesses who used to work at other Korean hostess club. She said there were a couple of Philippina women working there.

- 7) Bars include the smaller drinking places as well.
- 8) Other than *Minami*, Korean hostess clubs and bars are concentrated in *Imazato*, which is adjacent to *Tsuruhashi*, Japan's largest Korean community, and another pleasure district in Osaka, called *Kitashinchi*.
- 9) This is one of the major train stations in Osaka.
- 10) I also saw immigration or police officers interrogating women on the streets asking for their passports. I was also stopped by the officers from the *Minami* Police Station more than once.
- 11) This means that about ten percent of the beauty salons in *Minami* area are Korean beauty salons.
- 12) The usage of term, *sensei* (meaning teacher) reveals their respect to someone who has special talent. However, it is interesting to note that show members who have a similar talent as dancing or singing are never called *sensei*.
- 13) Although the majority of workers are Koreans at the Korean clubs, those Japanese who have special advantages such as being able to bring in lots of customers or are good at accompanying Japanese popular music are welcomed to work at the Korean clubs, even though they cannot speak Korean. However, resident Koreans or Japanese hostesses who do not speak Korean are not encouraged to work. It is difficult to work with other Korean hostesses because most of the conversation among hostesses is in Korean.
- 14) *Shunin* literally means chief.
- 15) Some hostesses use taxis even within walking distance to avoid the immigration and police officers who interrogate "suspicious" people on the street.
- 16) Their visa expires and they stay in Japan "illegally."
- 17) I know only one exception of someone who worked as a hostess with an expired visa. The employers are punished with imprisonment for up to three years and/or a fine up to two million yen (\$16,000) if they are found hiring people without proper visas.
- 18) Since visa issues are touchy, it was hard for me to ask all the workers at the club what kind of visa they had. Therefore, I could not include all of them. Instead, I included workers other than those I worked with, who volunteered to give me the information.
- 19) This visa allows them to engage in activities like theatrical performances, musical performances, sports, or any other show.
- 20) This is the so-called tourist visa.
- 21) Korean hostesses told me that they could not get 90-day permission unless they had relatives in Japan.
- 22) I observed Korea-born Korean hostesses feeding their clients with their fingers and chopsticks. Some clients interpreted this as intimacy and liked it.
- 23) Some clients interpret the lack of fluency in Japanese as less intimidating and cute.
- 24) This type of gender role division is commonly observed at the Korean establishments in *Minami*. Females take care of cooking and males take care of serving at the Korean restaurants. At the Japanese restaurants, males more often take care of cooking and females wait on tables.
- 25) When I asked them why they would not eat together, they answered they had already eaten in the kitchen.
- 26) During the waiting time, show members and hostesses chatted and joked a lot. It was more animated than at the Japanese hostess clubs.
- 27) Neither male staff nor female kitchen staff punched timecards.
- 28) This was so that hostesses can be more attentive to the clients' needs.
- 29) Smaller and cheaper bars use *karaoke*.
- 30) Show members' contracts expire every three months or six months. In other words, every three or six months, new show members are introduced. "Freshness" seems to be valued at the clubs.
- 31) However, legally, show members are not allowed to sit down with the clients.
- 32) I see the influence of military training in how Korean male staff behave at the club. They are obedient to their boss and clients. I also heard male staff saying that the relationship among male staff members at the Korean clubs are "military style" both from the superintendent as well as waiter.
- 33) This seating requires caution sometimes. For example, clients who do not get along with or compete over the same hostess are usually seated apart, so that they cannot see each other.
- 34) Most games are aimed at drinking more.
- 35) A popular dish is sushi.
- 36) Tips to the accompanist vary from around 1,000 yen (\$8) to 10,000 yen (\$80).
- 37) One waiter told me that newly arrived show members are "checked" by the male staff at the club in terms of sexual interest as well. At Japanese hostess clubs, dating hostesses at the same club is strongly prohibited. If they are found out, male staff have to pay a fine of up to 500,000 yen (\$4,000) and they are fired. At the Korean hostess clubs, there does not seem to be such a rule and I observed some couples of male staff and hostesses/show members dating.
- 38) In 1984, the Law Regulating Adult Entertainment

Businesses was changed to Regulations of Adult Entertainment Business and Laws regarding Moderation of Service. It is generally abbreviated as Laws of Moderating Adult Entertainment. This law prohibited the hostess clubs from operating after midnight. On April 1, 1999, the Revision of Laws of Moderating Adult Entertainment took effect. This law extended the operation hours of the hostess clubs until 1 a.m. Adult entertainment businesses except for *pachinko* parlors and game centers came to be called Operation of Business Entertainment of Eating and Drinking.

- 39) Getting their hair done at the beauty salon is almost mandatory for hostesses and *mama*. However, the show members are not so obliged. I think their salary is not as high as hostesses since productions, which sent them to the club, take away almost half of their income.
- 40) However, only one thousand yen (\$8) is reimbursed to the accompanying hostess or show member.
- 41) Korean hostess clubs used to charge for these items.
- 42) While I was working as a hostess, the position of associate director was not filled.
- 43) Their entertainer visas only allow them to do performances at the club. Legally, they are not allowed to sit down next to the customers. However, it is rather common that show members are used as hostesses at the Korean clubs in *Minami*.
- 44) Hostesses are responsible to pay the club if their customers do not pay their bill by a certain day. It is up to the hostesses how to collect the money owed by their customers. This responsibility often makes hostesses go into debt and this is one example of how hostesses are exploited.
- 45) If hostesses fail to fulfill the norm (or work quota, usually accompanying clients six times a month at least), a fine of 20,000 yen (\$160) is charged each time.
- 46) A fixed amount of 10,000 yen (\$80) tax and a 5,000 yen (\$40) miscellaneous fee are subtracted automatically. If the hostesses decide to give a free bottle to a customer, it is also subtracted automatically under the name "service."
- 47) She owes 1,020,000 yen (\$8,160) to the club. The reason that this is not subtracted is that she has asked the club not to do so this month due to her cash needs, I suspect.
- 48) She started to come to work from the middle of the month.
- 49) She borrowed 1,000,000 yen (\$8000) this month from the club. So, subtraction will start from next month. Usually 100,000 yen (\$800, which is 10% of the debt) is subtracted from her salary each month.

- 50) She received a temporary loan of 29,000 yen (\$232) the previous month. That amount is automatically subtracted from this month's salary.
- 51) She only worked two days this month. Therefore, she was subtracted 2,000 yen (\$16) for a miscellaneous fee and 5,000 yen (\$40) for tax instead of 5,000 yen (\$40) and 10,000 yen (\$80) respectively.
- 52) She received a temporary loan of 52,000 yen (\$416) the previous month. That amount is automatically subtracted from this month's salary. But she worked only one day. So, there is still a negative amount even though the club did not subtract tax or a miscellaneous fee.
- 53) She was scouted from another club and given a loan 2,100,000 yen (\$16,800) by this club. She had some family business to take care in Korea. So, she was absent this month. But the superintendent had great expectations from her in terms of her sales.
- 54) She borrowed 750,000 yen (\$6000) this month from the club. So, subtraction will start from next month.
- 55) She is a "frequent flyer" worker but such workers cannot work as much as resident workers. So, the club subtracted only 3,000 yen (\$24) for miscellaneous fees and 5,000 yen (\$40) for tax.
- 56) She borrowed 500,000 yen (\$4,000) this month from the club. So, subtraction will start from next month.
- 57) She is also a "frequent flyer" worker. So, the club subtracted only 3,000 yen (\$24) for miscellaneous fees and 5,000 yen (\$40) for tax.
- 58) The club did not subtract miscellaneous fees or tax from her at all. She is a young and beautiful woman, like a model. I suspect the club wanted her to come back to work again. So, she got a special deal.
- 59) She made an arrangement with the club. She and the club divide her sales in half, which is 1,150,000 yen (\$9,200) each. Then she also pays 10% of her portion, which is 115,000 yen (\$920) to the club for expenses such as whiskey, hostess fees, and rent etc. In other words, her monthly salary fluctuates a lot depending on her sales.
- 60) She borrowed 3,000,000 yen (\$24,000) this month from the club. So, subtraction will start from next month.
- 61) She requested a temporary loan of 300,000 yen (\$2,400) from the club previous month. So, this amount was automatically subtracted from her salary.
- 62) She is the only *chii mama* whose salary is based on daily wages. She received 25,000 yen (\$200) per day. She made this arrangement because her sales are not high enough, I suspect.
- 63) She requested a temporary loan of 200,000 yen (\$1,600)

the previous month. So, this amount was automatically subtracted from her salary.

- 64) I conducted my research in Japanese hostess clubs from February 2000 to October 2000. I used the same research methods of participant observation, interviews and library research.

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